

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP & The ENVIRONMENT



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communications

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GENDER EXPERT

THE NATIONAL TREASURY

KENYA

Gender, Water & Fisheries

Water Scarcity in Kenya

- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, Clean water and sanitation, sets various targets to make water sustainable for use by the year 2030.
- Kenya, which has a growing population, is known as a water-scarce country due to its low supply of renewable freshwater (<1000 m³/capita/year).
- With a population of 50 million, 32 percent of Kenyans rely on unimproved water sources, such as ponds, shallow wells and rivers, while 48 percent of Kenyans lack access to basic sanitation solutions.
- These challenges are especially evident in rural areas and urban slums where people are often unable to connect to piped water infrastructure.
- Water scarcity in Kenya is affecting the Kenyan population who relies on water resources not only for drinking but also for **agriculture (including livestock and fisheries)**

The Blue Economy

- Africa first **Sustainable Blue Economy Conference** took place in Nairobi in 2018. Co-hosted in Nairobi by the governments of Kenya, Canada, and Japan.
- The conference aimed to capture concrete commitments and practical actions to sustainably tap the potential of the world's oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers, particularly to support developing states, women, youth, and Indigenous peoples.
- **Women and SDG 14** – Life under water focus is to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- Ensuring women's access to leadership positions and empowering women action on the oceans are fundamental to allow them to play a key role in protecting marine ecosystems, tackling marine litter and promoting sustainable fishing.

COVID-19 Impacts impact on Fisheries Sector

- The Kenya Marine and Research Fisheries Institute reported in 2017 that Kenya is ranked as the fourth major producer of aquaculture in Africa, with 2014 production of 24,096 metric tonnes. However, the aquaculture fish trade depends on active tourism in Kenya and COVID restrictions meant that most restaurants and accommodation ceased operations particularly within the coastal counties.
- Women entrepreneurs in fisheries, known as *mama karanga*, typically retail fried fish in the evenings (between 16:00 to 21:00) in market centres within the cities, coastal towns, lake towns and villages. They buy fresh fish from the beaches or fresh fish retailing shops and fry for sale. The introduction of a curfew and cessation of movement led to reduced trading hours and reduced income. Many traders have had to suspend their operations.
- The government has suspended resource allocation for office operations and this has affected that include licensing of fishers and fishing vessels, patrols, data collection, observer deployments, port inspections on fishing vessels, pre-sailing, pre-fishing pre-landing, inspections at fish landing sites and markets...

Gender Roles and the Fishery Sector

- Globally, women make up 47% of the 120 million people who earn money directly from fishing and processing.
- Women occupy a central place in the fishing sector. For example in Kenya, women represents 70% to 87% of fish-workers involved in this activity especially in the artisanal fish trade.
- Traditionally fishing is a man activity. A few women own boats. Most women are involved in processing and trading of fish, purchase of fish from fishermen, cook fish in restaurants or at home, serve fried fish in kiosks, hawk raw, dry, smoked or cooked fish door-to-door, in market places or to restaurants.
- Majority of women choose fisheries as the last option after they have tried many other activities. This is because of the low profit, as market prices are not regulated. Most women involved in this business are illiterate, mainly divorced or single mothers, including girls who got pregnant and dropped out of school

Key Barriers to Women Participation in the Fishing Sector

Limited Capacity

- Women engaged in the fishing sector lack access to capital, investments, and equipment to grow their businesses.
- There is not enough focus by the financial institutions (including microfinance institutions) in the fishing sector despite its potential.
- Developing innovative financial services specifically suited to women's needs such as equipment leasing, for Indigenous women and women's cooperatives working in the fisheries sector is needed.

Key Barriers to Women Participation in the Fishing Sector

Structural Barriers

- Growth in the Blue Economy is framed in the context of the mass exploitation of untapped resources via large investments, with the assumption that this will create jobs for locals, small-scale fishers, and women. Conversely, most of these jobs are low-skilled. Big Capital prevents innovation from reaching the small-scale fisheries where women tend to work, which disproportionately impacts them. Despite the fact that women provide more than 85% of the landed catch, even when investment is available it reaches men first.
- Likewise, the market for licenses in the fisheries sector threatens local catches and livelihoods by facilitating unregulated access of foreign fleets in the territorial waters in the otherwise exclusive economic zones of several African countries. Despite growing research evidence of the negative impacts of large-scale activities on the degradation of the ecosystem, it remains an insufficiently-addressed danger.

Key Barriers to Women Participation in the Fishing Sector

Social – Cultural Barriers

- Women participation and contribution in the fisheries sector is often overlooked, undervalued and underrepresented in most fishing communities in Kenya.
- Discriminatory gender and social norms prohibit women from participating in certain aspects of the fishing sector, creating an additional burden on them. In order for transformative change, investments, and innovations to be realized, it is not enough to simply promote jobs for women in the sector.
- There is need for local ideas for constructive shifts in cultural and social norms that challenge the idea that it is sufficient for projects to merely include women in order for research or development to be empowering and transform gender dynamics for example male engagement, and use of theatre within the community

Key Barriers to Women Participation in the Fishing Sector

Lack of Women Voices in Decision Making

- Women's voices are largely absent in decision-making. There is need to work closely with civil society organizations working at grassroot levels to amplify women voices.

Asanteni Sana, Thank you

